॥ योगतारावली ॥

॥ yogatārāvalī ॥

A Garland of Stars on Yoga

वन्दे गुरूणां चरणारविन्दे
सन्दर्शितस्वात्मसुखावबोधे।
जनस्य ये जाङ्गलिकायमाने
संसार हालाहलमोहशान्त्यै॥ १ ॥

vande gurūṇāṁ caraṇāravinde
sandarśitasvātmasukhāvabodhe |
janasya ye jāṅgalikāyamāne
saṁsāra hālāhalamohaśāntyai || 1 ||

I bow to the lotus feet of the Gurus,
who reveal the blissful awareness of the Self;
who, like forest physicians for the multitude lost in delusion,
bring about the pacification of the delusion born of the deadly poison of saṁsāra.

सदाशिवोक्तानि सपादलक्ष
लयावधानानि वसन्ति लोके।
नादानुसन्धानसमाधिमेकं
मन्यामहे मान्यतमं लयानाम्॥ २ ॥

sadāśivoktāni sapādalakṣa
layāvadhānāni vasanti loke |
nādānusandhānasamādhimekaṁ
manyāmahe mānyatamaṁ layānām || 2 ||

2. Of the one and a quarter lakh teachings on absorption
spoken by Sadāśiva and existing in the world,[1]
we regard the *nāda-anusandhāna samādhi,*
absorption through concentration on inner sound,
as the most worthy among all methods of absorption.

1. Sadāśiva, the divine source of yogic knowledge, is traditionally said to have revealed 125,000 methods of laya or absorption. The number signifies the vastness of spiritual techniques rather than an exact enumeration. This invocation links the Yoga Tārāvalī to Śaiva yogic lineages such as those of the Śiva Saṁhitā and Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā.

स रेचपूरैरनिलस्य कुम्भैः

सर्वासु नाडीषु विशोधितासु।
अनाहताख्यो बहुभिः प्रकाशैर्
अन्तः प्रवर्तेत सदा निनादः॥ ३ ॥

sa recapūrairanilasya kumbhaiḥ
sarvāsu nāḍīṣu viśodhitāsu |
anāhatākhyo bahubhiḥ prakāśair
antaḥ pravarteta sadā ninādaḥ || 3 ||

3. When the breath has been purified through exhalation, inhalation,
and retention (recaka, pūraka, and kumbhaka),
and all the nāḍīs have been thoroughly cleansed,[2]
may the inner sound called *anāhata* and (light) shining forth in many ways,
ever arise within.

2. The nāḍīs are subtle channels through which vital energy (prāṇa) flows within the yogic body. When purified through breath regulation (prāṇāyāma), the anāhata nāda or "unstruck sound" arises inwardly. This mystical sound is associated with the Anāhata Cakra, the heart centre of subtle consciousness.

नादानुसन्धानाय नमोऽस्तु तुभ्यं
त्वां साधनं तत्त्वपदस्य जाने।
भवत्प्रसादात् पवनैनसाकं
विलीयते विष्णुपदे मनो मे॥ ४ ॥

nādānusandhānāya namo'stu tubhyaṁ
tvāṁ sādhanaṁ tattvapadasya jāne |
bhavatprasādāt pavanaenasākaṁ
vilīyate viṣṇupade mano me || 4 ||

4. Salutations unto Thee, O *Nāda-anusandhāna* (inner sound meditation);
I recognise Thee as the means for realising the supreme state of reality.
By Thy grace, along with the vital breath (prāṇa),
may my mind dissolve in the abode of Viṣṇu (the supreme reality).

जालन्धरोड्यानमूलबन्धान्
जल्पन्ति कण्ठोदरपायुमूलात्।
बन्धत्रयेऽस्मिन् परिचीयमाने
बन्धः कुतो दारुणकालपाशात्॥ ५ ॥

jālandharoḍyānamūlabandhān
jalpanti kaṇṭhodarapāyumūlāt |

bandhatraye'smin paricīyamāne
bandhaḥ kuto dāruṇakālapāśāt || 5 ||

5. They speak of *Jālandhara*, *Uḍḍiyāna*, and *Mūla-bandhas*,
which pertain respectively to the throat, abdomen, and base of the anus.[3]
When one becomes proficient in these three bandhas,
then what bondage remains from the dreadful noose of Time (death)?

3. The three bandhas are yogic "locks" that regulate prāṇic flow: Jālandhara (throat lock), Uḍḍīyāna (abdominal contraction and lift), and Mūla (root contraction). Mastery of these directs the apāna and prāṇa winds into the central channel (Suṣumṇā), awakening the energy (kuṇḍalinī śakti). This symbolism is fundamental to haṭha yoga physiology.

उड्डीयनजालन्धरमूलबन्धैः
उन्निद्रितायामुरगाङ्गनायाम्।
प्रत्यङ्गमुखत्वात् प्रविशन् सुषुम्णां
गमागमौ मुञ्चति गन्धवाहः॥ ६ ॥

uḍḍīyanajālandharamūlabandhaiḥ
unnidritāyām uragāṅganāyām |
pratyaṅgamukhatvāt praviśan suṣumṇāṁ
gamāgamau muñcati gandhavāhaḥ || 6 ||

6. By the *Uḍḍīyāna, Jālandhara*, and *Mūla* bandhas,
when she, (kuṇḍalinī) the serpent-woman (of the three cities) is awakened,
and, because of the inward-facing direction, enters the *Suṣumṇā*,
then the breath ceases to move in its usual going and coming.

उत्थापिताधारहुताशनोल्कैः
आकुञ्चनैः शश्वदपानवायोः।
सन्तापिताच्चन्द्रमसः पतन्ती
पीयूषधारां पिबतीह धन्यः॥ ७ ॥

utthāpitādhārahutāśanolkaiḥ
ākuñcanaiḥ śaśvadapānavāyoḥ |
santāpitāc candramasaḥ patantī
pīyūṣadhārāṁ pibatīha dhanyaḥ || 7 ||

7. He is blessed indeed who,
by ever contracting the downward-moving breath (*apāna vāyu*),
raises the fiery sparks from the *ādhāra* (mūlādhāra) fire,[4]
melts the moon above by its heat,
and drinks the descending stream of nectar.

4. The "fire at the base" refers to the mūlādhāra cakra, where latent spiritual energy resides. Its heat is said to melt the "moon" at the crown, releasing the nectar (amṛta) of immortality that descends through the subtle body. This imagery, shared by the Haṭhapradīpikā, expresses the transmutation of vital essence into spiritual bliss.

बन्धत्रयाभ्यासविपाकजातां
विवर्जितां रेचकपूरकाभ्याम्।
विशोषयन्ती विषयप्रवाहं
विद्यां भजे केवलकुम्भरूपाम्॥ ८ ॥

bandhatrayābhyāsavipākajātāṁ
vivarjitāṁ recakapūrakābhyām |
viśoṣayantī viṣayapravāhaṁ
vidyāṁ bhaje kevalakumbharūpām || 8 ||

8. I worship that *Knowledge* (vidyā),
born of the fruit of practising the three *bandhas*,
free from both exhalation and inhalation,
which dries up the flow of sense-objects,
and manifests in the form of *kevala-kumbhaka* (spontaneous breath retention).[5]

5. Kevala kumbhaka means "absolute retention," the spontaneous cessation of breath occurring when the mind and prāṇa are perfectly still. Unlike controlled recaka (exhalation) and pūraka (inhalation), it arises effortlessly. Classical haṭha texts treat kevala kumbhaka as the culmination of prāṇāyāma practice and the threshold to samādhi.

अनाहते चेतसि सावधानैर्
अभ्यासशुरैरनुभूयमाना।
संस्तम्भितश्वासमनःप्रचाराः
सा जृम्भते केवलकुम्भकश्रीः॥ ९ ॥

anāhate cetasi sāvadānair
abhyāsaśurair anubhūyamānā |
saṁstambhitaśvāsamanaḥpracārāḥ
sā jṛmbhate kevalakumbhakaśrīḥ || 9 ||

9. When experienced by those vigilant in mind and skilled in practice,
in the *anāhata* (heart) centre of consciousness,
with breath and mental movements stilled,
then unfolds the glorious state of *kevala-kumbhaka*.

सहस्रशः सन्तु हठेषु कुम्भाः
संभाव्यते केवलकुम्भ एव।

कुम्भोत्तमे यत्र तु रेचपूरौ
प्राणस्य न प्राकृतवैकृताख्यौ॥ १० ॥

sahasraśaḥ santu haṭheṣu kumbhāḥ
saṁbhāvyate kevalakumbha eva |
kumbhottame yatra tu recakapūrau
prāṇasya na prākṛtavaikṛtākhyau || 10 ||

10. Though thousands of *kumbhakas* are practised in the systems of *Haṭha Yoga*,
it is the *kevala-kumbhaka* alone that is to be esteemed.
In the highest form of kumbhaka,
neither inhalation (*pūraka*) nor exhalation (*recaka*) of prāṇa
is recognised as natural or modified.

त्रिकूटनाम्नि स्तिमितेऽन्तरङ्गे
खे स्तम्भिते केवलकुम्भकेन।
प्राणानिलो भानुशशाङ्कनाड्यौ
विहाय सद्यो विलयं प्रयाति॥ ११ ॥

trikūṭanāmni stimite'ntaraṅge
khe stambhite kevalakumbhakena |
prāṇānilo bhānuśaśāṅkanāḍyau
vihāya sadyo vilayaṁ prayāti || 11 ||

11. When the inner organ (*mind*) becomes still in the centre called *Trikūṭa*,[6]
and the space (*kha*) is stilled through *kevala-kumbhaka*,
then the prāṇic air (*prāṇānila*), along with the solar and lunar nāḍīs,
immediately abandons them and proceeds to dissolution.

6. Trikūṭa (“three peaks”) symbolises the inner region where the three main nāḍīs converge. Bhānu (sun) and śaśāṅka (moon) denote the solar and lunar channels, piṅgalā and iḍā. “Viṣṇu’s abode” (Viṣṇupada) metaphorically signifies the heart or crown where prāṇa dissolves into pure consciousness.

प्रत्याहृतः केवलकुम्भकेन
प्रबुद्धकुण्डल्युपभुक्तशेषः।
प्राणः प्रतीचीनपथेन मन्दं
विलीयते विष्णुपदान्तराले॥ १२ ॥

pratyāhṛtaḥ kevalakumbhakena
prabuddhakuṇḍalyupabhuktaśeṣaḥ |
prāṇaḥ pratīcīnapathena mandaṁ
vilīyate viṣṇupadāntarāle || 12 ||

12. With the aid of *kevala-kumbhaka*, the prāṇa is withdrawn;
its remaining movement, after being enjoyed by the awakened *kuṇḍalinī*,
slowly moves along the westward (inward) path,
and dissolves in the inner space of *Viṣṇu's abode*.

निरङ्कुशनिःश्वसनोद्गमानां
निरोधनैः केवलकुम्भकाख्यैः।
उदेतिसर्वेन्द्रियवृत्तिशून्यो
मरुत्लयः कोऽपि महामतीनाम्॥ १३ ॥

niraṅkuśaniḥśvasanodgamānāṁ
nirodhanaiḥ kevalakumbhakākhyaiḥ |
udetisarvendriyavṛttiśūnyo
marutlayaḥ ko'pi mahāmatīnām || 13 ||

13. By the restraining power of *kevala-kumbhaka*,
which halts all uncontrolled rising and falling of the breath,
there arises a dissolution of the wind (*prāṇa*),
utterly devoid of all sensory activity,
a marvellous state of *marut-laya*[7] known only to the truly wise.

7. Marut-laya (“dissolution of the winds”) describes the yogic condition in which all movements of breath and vital force are completely absorbed. When this occurs, the senses and the mind become inert, leading to the stillness that precedes unmanī avasthā, the state beyond mind.

न दृष्टिलक्ष्याणि न चित्तबन्धो
न देशकालौ न च वायुरोधः।
न धारणाध्यानपरिश्रमो वा
समेधमाने सतिराजयोगे॥ १४ ॥

na dṛṣṭilakṣyāṇi na cittabandho
na deśakālau na ca vāyurodhaḥ |
na dhāraṇādhyānapariśramo vā
samedhamāne satirājayoge || 14 ||

14. In the arising of true *Rāja Yoga*,[8]
there is no need for fixing the gaze,
nor for restraint of the mind,
nor specification of place or time,
nor breath control,
nor even the exertion of concentration (*dhāraṇā*) or meditation (*dhyāna*).

8. Here Rāja Yoga is presented as the supreme yoga of spontaneous awareness. All methods such as gazing, breath control, and mental concentration fall away when non-dual consciousness dawns. The verses echo Advaitic ideas found in the Yoga Vāsiṣṭha and Māṇḍūkya Kārikā, where the distinction between seer and seen vanishes in pure awareness (kevala-saṁvid).

अशेषदृश्योज्झितदृग्मयानाम्
अवस्थितानामिह राजयोगे।
न जागरो नापि सुषुप्तिभावो
न जीवितं नो मरणं विचित्रम्॥ १५ ॥

aśeṣadṛśyojjhitadṛgmayānām
avasthitānāmiha rājayoge |
na jāgaro nāpi suṣuptibhāvo
na jīvitaṁ no maraṇaṁ vicitram || 15 ||

15. For those established in *Rāja Yoga*,
whose awareness has abandoned all objects of perception and is merged with the Seer,
there is no waking, nor the state of deep sleep;
neither living nor dying appears to them, such is the marvellous reality.

अहंममत्वाद्व्यपहाय सर्वं
श्रीराजयोगे स्थिरमानसानाम्।
न द्रष्टृता नास्ति च दृश्यभावः
सा जृम्भते केवलसंविदेव॥ १६ ॥

ahaṁmamatvādyapahāya sarvaṁ
śrīrājayoge sthiramānasānām |
na draṣṭṛtā nāsti ca dṛśyabhāvaḥ
sā jṛmbhate kevalasaṁvideva || 16 ||

16. Having entirely abandoned all notions of "I" and "mine,"
for those whose minds are steady in the supreme *Rāja Yoga*,
there remains neither the status of seer nor any object seen,
only pure Consciousness alone unfolds and shines forth.

नेत्रे यथोन्मेषनिमेषशून्ये
वायुर्यथा वर्जितरेचपूरः।
मनश्च सङ्कल्पविकल्पशून्यं
मनोननी सा मयि सन्निधत्ताम्॥ १७ ॥

netre yathonmeṣanimeṣaśūnye
vāyur yathā varjitarecakapūraḥ |

manaś ca saṅkalpavikalpaśūnyaṁ
manonanī sā mayi sannidhattām || 17 ||

17. As the eyes become devoid of blinking and opening,
as the breath is free from both exhalation and inhalation,
and as the mind becomes free of all thought and counter-thought,
may that *Manonanī*[9] (mind-stilling force) dwell ever-present within me.

9. Manonanī (lit. "mind-resting") is a rare term indicating the inner force that stills mental activity. It may be synonymous with manolaya (dissolution of mind). The imagery of motionless yogins "like lamps in windless places" also appears in Bhagavad Gītā 6.19, symbolising perfect meditative absorption.

चित्तेन्द्रियाणां चिरनिग्रहेण
श्वासप्रचारे शमिते यमीन्द्राः।
निवातदीपा इव निश्चलाङ्गाः
मनोननीमग्नधियो भवन्ति॥ १८ ॥

cittendriyāṇāṁ ciranigraheṇa
śvāsapracāre śamite yamīndrāḥ |
nivātadīpā iva niścalāṅgāḥ
manonanīmagnadhiyo bhavanti || 18 ||

18. By long control over the mind and senses,
and pacification of the flow of breath,
the lords of self-restraint (*yamīndrāḥ*),
with motionless bodies like lamps in windless spaces,
become absorbed in *Manonanī*, the force that dissolves the mind.

उन्मन्यवस्थाधिगमाय विद्वन्
उपायमेकं तव निर्दिशामः।
पश्यन्नुदासीनतया प्रपञ्चं
सङ्कल्पमुनमूलय सावधानः॥ १९ ॥

unmanyavasthādhigamāya vidvan
upāyamekaṁ tava nirdiśāmaḥ |
paśyannudāsīnatayā prapañcaṁ
saṅkalpamunamūlaya sāvadānaḥ || 19 ||

19. O wise one (*vidvan*),
to attain the state of *unmanī* (transcendence of mind),[10]
we prescribe to you a single method:
While perceiving the world (*prapañca*) with indifference,
be fully vigilant and uproot the *saṅkalpa*-mind, the mind of thought-construction.

10. The unmanī avasthā or "mindless state" is the condition in which all thought (saṅkalpa) ceases. The instruction to "break the stream of thoughts" (saṅkalpa-paramparā) recalls the Yoga Sūtra definition of yoga as citta-vṛtti-nirodha, the stilling of mental modifications. This represents the practical climax of Rāja Yoga.

प्रसह्य सङ्कल्पपरंपराणां
संभेदनें सन्ततसावधानम्।
आलम्बनाशादपचीयमानं
शनैः शनैः शान्तिमुपैति चेतः॥ २० ॥

prasahya saṅkalpaparaṁparāṇāṁ
saṁbhedane santatasāvadhānam |
ālambanāśād apacīyamānaṁ
śanaiḥ śanaiḥ śāntim upaiti cetaḥ || 20 ||

20. By forcefully breaking the continuous stream of thoughts (*saṅkalpa-paramparā*),
and remaining ever-vigilant in that disruption,
as supports (*ālambana*) fall away and diminish,
the mind (*cetaḥ*) gradually attains peace, little by little.

निःश्वासलोपैर्निभृतैः शरीरैः
नेत्राम्बुजैरर्धनिमीलितैश्च।
आविर्भवन्तीममनस्कमुद्रां
आलोकयामो मुनिपुङ्गवानाम्॥ २१ ॥

niḥśvāsalopair nibhṛtaiḥ śarīraiḥ
netrāmbujair ardhanimīlitaiś ca |
āvirbhavantīm amanaskamudrāṁ
ālokayāmo munipuṅgavānām || 21 ||

21. With cessation of breath, bodies held still,
and lotus-like eyes half-closed,
we behold the emergence of *Amanaska Mudrā*,[11]
the mindless seal, of the foremost among sages.

11. Amanaska Mudrā ("mindless seal") designates the state in which all mental movement has ceased. The term occurs in the Amanaska Yoga, a cognate text to the Yoga Tārāvalī. Its manifestation in the body, with half-closed eyes and breath stilled, marks the yogin's complete inward absorption.

अमी यमीन्द्राः सहजामनस्कात्
अहंममत्वे शिथिलायमाने।

मनातिगं मारुतवृत्तिशून्यं
गच्छन्ति भावं गगनावशेषम्॥ २२ ॥

amī yamīndrāḥ sahajāmanaskāt
ahaṁmamatve śithilāyamāne |
manātigaṁ mārutavṛttiśūnyaṁ
gacchanti bhāvaṁ gaganāvaśeṣam || 22 ||

22. These masters of self-restraint (*yamīndrāḥ*),
from their natural state of *amanaska* (beyond thought),
as the sense of "I" and "mine" loosens,
attain a state beyond mind and devoid of breath's movement,
a condition where only the sky-like vastness remains.

निवर्तयन्ति निखिलेन्द्रियाणि
प्रवर्तयन्तीं परमात्मयोगम्।
संविन्मयीं तां सहजामनस्कां
कदा गमिष्यामि गतान्यभावः॥ २३ ॥

nivartayanti nikhilendriyāṇi
pravartayantīṁ paramātmayogam |
saṁvinmayīṁ tāṁ sahajāmanaskāṁ
kadā gamiṣyāmi gatānyabhāvaḥ || 23 ||

23. She, who withdraws all the senses
and initiates the supreme union with the Self,
who is composed of pure consciousness (*saṁvin*)
and is the natural state beyond mind (*sahajāmanaskā*),[12]
when shall I, free of all otherness, attain to her?

12. Sahajāmanaska (“natural mindlessness”) denotes the effortless, innate condition of awareness free from deliberation. Paramātma Yoga (“union with the Supreme Self”) refers to the culmination of spiritual realisation, where all sensory and mental functions are withdrawn into pure consciousness (saṁvin).

प्रत्यग्विमर्शातिशयेन पुंसां
प्राचीनगन्धेषु पलायितेषु।
प्रादुर्भवेत्काचिदजाड्यनिद्रा
प्रपञ्चचिन्तां परिवर्जयन्ती॥ २४ ॥

pratyagvimarśātiśayena puṁsāṁ
prācīnagandheṣu palāyiteṣu |
prādurbhavet kācid ajāḍyanidrā
prapañcacintāṁ parivarjayantī || 24 ||

24. When the deep inward discernment (*pratyag-vimarśa*) becomes intense in men,
and all impressions of the past (*prācīna-gandha*) have fled,
then arises a certain *wakeful sleep* (*ajāḍya-nidrā*),[13]
which excludes all thought of worldly manifestation (*prapañca*).

13. Ajāḍya-nidrā (“wakeful sleep”) and Yoga-nidrā (“yogic sleep”) describe states of awareness without thought or external perception. The “couch of Turīya” represents the fourth state beyond waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, as described in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, the repose of pure consciousness itself.

Though related, Ajāḍya-nidrā and Yoga-nidrā denote distinct phases of this inner process: Ajāḍya-nidrā is the transitional state in which awareness persists while sensory and cognitive activity subside, whereas Yoga-nidrā is the consummated and stable condition in which the latent mental currents (saṅkalpa–vikalpa) have been entirely dissolved. The former marks the threshold between thought and thoughtlessness; the latter, the complete repose of consciousness in itself.

विच्छिन्नसङ्कल्पविकल्पमूले
निःशेषनिर्मूलितकर्मजाले।
निरन्तराभ्यासनितान्तभद्रा
सा जृम्भते योगिनि योगनिद्रा॥ २५ ॥

vicchinnasaṅkalpavikalpamūle
niḥśeṣanirmūlitakarmajāle |
nirantarābhyāsanitāntabhadrā
sā jṛmbhate yogini yoganidrā || 25 ||

25. When the root of all thought and counter-thought is severed,
and the entire net of karmic impressions is utterly uprooted,
then, by unbroken and supreme practice,
Yoga-nidrā, the blessed sleep of the yogin, arises and unfolds.

विश्रान्तिमासाद्य तुरीयतल्पे
विश्वाद्यवस्थात्रितयोपरिष्टे।
संविन्मयीं कामपि सर्वकाले
निद्रां सखे निर्विश निरविकल्पाम्॥ २६ ॥

viśrāntim āsādya turīyatalpe
viśvādyavasthātritayopariṣṭhe |
saṁvinmayīṁ kām api sarvakāle
nidrāṁ sakhe nirviśa niravikalpām || 26 ||

26. Having attained true repose upon the couch of *Turīya* (the fourth state),
which lies beyond the triad of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep,
may you, O friend, enter into that ineffable sleep,

composed of pure consciousness, ever-present,
devoid of all distinction and free from all thought.

प्रकाशमाने परमात्मभावे
नश्यत्यविद्यातिमिरे समस्ते।
अहो बुधा निर्मलदृष्टयोऽपि
किञ्चिन्न पश्यन्ति जगत्समग्रम्॥ २७ ॥

prakāśamāne paramātmabhāve
naśyaty avidyātimire samaste |
aho budhā nirmaladṛṣṭayo'pi
kiñcin na paśyanti jagatsamagram || 27 ||

27. When the realisation of the Supreme Self begins to shine,
the entire darkness of ignorance is destroyed.[14]
Ah! Even the wise, whose vision is spotless and pure,
do not perceive anything at all, not even the entire world.

14. When the realisation of the Supreme Self (paramātma-bhāva) arises, the world of multiplicity disappears, as taught in the Māṇḍūkya Kārikā (3.31) and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (4.3.23). The yogin's vision is "spotless" because perception is absorbed into undivided consciousness.

सिद्धिं तथाविधमनोविलयां समाधौ
श्रीशैलशृङ्गकुहरेषु कदोपलप्स्ये।
गात्रं तदा मम लताः परिवेष्टयन्ति
कर्णे यदा विरचयन्ति खगाश्च नीडान्॥ २८ ॥

siddhiṁ tathāvidhamanovilayāṁ samādhau
śrīśailaśṛṅgakuhareṣu kadopalapsye |
gātraṁ tadā mama latāḥ pariveṣṭayanti
karṇe yadā viracayanti khagāś ca nīḍān || 28 ||

28. When shall I attain that accomplishment (*siddhi*),
the dissolution of the mind in deep *samādhi*,
in the caves upon the peaks of sacred Śrīśaila? [15]
When vines entwine my body,
and birds begin to build nests in my ears,
unaware of time and the world, absorbed in stillness.

15. Śrīśaila (modern Śrīśailam) is a renowned mountain sanctuary on the right bank of the Kṛṣṇa River in Andhra Pradesh. One of the twelve jyotirliṅgas of Śiva, it is dedicated to Mallikārjuna and Bhṛamarāmbā and has been venerated since the early medieval period as a centre of ascetic and yogic practice. Mentioned in the Śiva Purāṇa, Skanda Purāṇa, and later Tantric texts, it was famed as a place where seekers attained liberation through meditation in its mountain caves.

In yogic symbolism, Śrīśaila signifies both the outer hermitage of solitude and the inner mountain of spiritual ascent. The poet's vision of vines entwining the body and birds nesting in the ears recalls an ancient motif of total stillness and detachment, the yogin so absorbed in samādhi that nature itself envelops him. Similar imagery occurs in the Haṭhapradīpikā (4.105–106) and Śivasaṁhitā (5.77), where such adepts are portrayed as having transcended time, space, and self in nirvikalpa samādhi.

विचरत्वतिरेषा निर्विकल्पसमाधौ
कुचकलशयुगे वा कृष्णसारेक्षणानाम्।
चरतु जडमते वा सज्जनानां मते वा
मतिकृतगुणदोषा मां विभुं न स्पृशन्ति॥ २९ ॥

vicaratv atireṣā nirvikalpasamādhau
kucakalaśayuge vā kṛṣṇasārekṣaṇānām |
caratu jaḍamate vā sajjanānāṁ mate vā
matikṛtaguṇadoṣā māṁ vibhuṁ na spṛśanti || 29 ||

29. Let this restless mind wander,[16]
whether in *nirvikalpa samādhi*, [17]
or amid the twin breasts of doe-eyed women.[18]
Let it dwell in the opinions of fools,[19]
or in the thoughts of the noble.[20]
The imagined dualities of merit and fault,
created by the mind,
do not touch me, the all-pervading one.

16. Literally, "let this mind wander." In yogic cosmology this wandering may be understood as movement through the three worlds (trailokya): bhūr, the gross physical world; bhuvar, the subtle realm of prāṇa and mind; and svar, the celestial or luminous domain of higher consciousness. These may also be interpreted inwardly as progressively subtler levels of experience within the yogic body and mind.

17. Nirvikalpa samādhi is the state of absorption in which all distinctions, thoughts, and conceptual constructs (vikalpa) are entirely absent. In this condition, consciousness abides in its own pure nature, free from subject and object, knower and known. Classical Advaita Vedānta regards nirvikalpa samādhi as the direct realisation of the Self (ātman), beyond all mental activity, while haṭha and rāja yoga traditions describe it as the culmination of meditation where prāṇa and mind are completely still. In this verse, the phrase underscores perfect non-dual awareness, untouched by sensory experience or conceptual division.

18. Here, Śakti is the doe-eyed tantric consort (whose nature is bliss), one must ride the waves of śakti up and down the spine to attain union in, about and above the skull to be anointed by the full breast of wisdom.

19. In this context, a fool is one who is immature, which implies not full-grown (above the skull), and without wisdom. In other words, śakti dwells "unmoving" in a fool (the dull-minded).

20. Noble, "high-born"; in other words, twice-born from the waters of the infinite (the shining womb of all creation).

On the Authorship of the *Yogatārāvalī*

The *Yoga Tārāvalī* has traditionally been attributed to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, the revered eighth-century Advaita Vedānta philosopher. However, modern scholarship has cast considerable doubt on this attribution. Linguistic and historical analyses indicate that the work belongs to a later era, most likely composed in the medieval period, around the thirteenth or fourteenth century. This time frame places it several centuries after Śaṅkarācārya's lifetime, suggesting that the traditional ascription is untenable.

Notably, the text itself is a concise yogic treatise comprising twenty-nine Sanskrit verses devoted to haṭha and rāja yoga practices. Such content is quite removed from the strictly non-dualistic philosophical writings known to have been penned by Śaṅkarācārya, and it aligns more closely with the *haṭha yoga* tradition that flourished in the medieval era. Indeed, the *Yoga Tārāvalī* is explicitly cited in the fifteenth-century *Haṭhapradīpikā*, a seminal compendium of haṭha yoga. The *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s author (Svātmārāma) drew on earlier sources of yoga, and the inclusion of *Yoga Tārāvalī* material in that 15th-century text firmly situates the *Yoga Tārāvalī* in a post-Śaṅkara context. This evidence, both the style and subject matter of the verses, and their appearance in later medieval compilations strongly undermines the idea that Śaṅkarācārya himself was the author.

Additional uncertainty arises from the fact that some traditional sources have ascribed the *Yoga Tārāvalī* to figures other than Śaṅkara. One prominent lineage, for example, credits the work to Govinda Bhagavatpāda, who was Śaṅkara's own guru. There are even variant attributions in certain manuscripts and commentaries, indicating confusion in pre-modern circles about who the true author was. Such contradictions in the textual tradition underscore the problematic nature of the Śaṅkarācārya attribution.

Given the combination of these factors, the anachronistic *haṭha*-oriented content, the historical evidence of a later composition date, and the conflicting attributions in different sources, scholars generally conclude that *Yoga Tārāvalī* was not authored by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. Instead, the text most likely emerged in a later medieval milieu, gaining retrospective association with Śaṅkara only through the tendency to attribute influential yoga teachings to famous ancient sages. In sum, while the *Yoga Tārāvalī* remains an important document in the yoga tradition, its true authorship almost certainly lies with a medieval Yogī rather than with Śaṅkarācārya himself.

English translation and footnotes, Śrī Maccidānanda Nātha, 2025.